



Home > Articles > Insights into hours worked, September 2021

Insights into hours worked, September 2021

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i **Source:** [Labour Force, Australia, September 2021](#)

On this page

- [Hours worked and employment](#)
- [States and territories](#)
- [People working fewer hours](#)
- [People working zero hours](#)

The ABS previously indicated its intention to cease publishing this article every month after the May 2021 issue (on 17 June 2021), and to only publish future updates as needed. Given the current lockdowns and other restrictions, the ABS intends to continue to publish further articles each month until changes in hours worked series return to pre-COVID conditions.

The September survey reference period was from 29 August to 11 September 2021. New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory were in lockdown during this period, with some easing of restrictions in regional Victoria on 10 September and some areas of regional New South Wales easing on 11 September. Hours worked recovered in Queensland, following the lockdowns in early August.

Hours worked and employment

Hours worked increased by 0.9% (in seasonally adjusted terms) between August and September 2021, while employment decreased by 1.1% or 138,000 people. The rise in hours worked followed three months of falls (1.8% in June, 0.2% in July and 3.7% in August) reflecting the impact of ongoing lockdowns and other restrictions over this period.

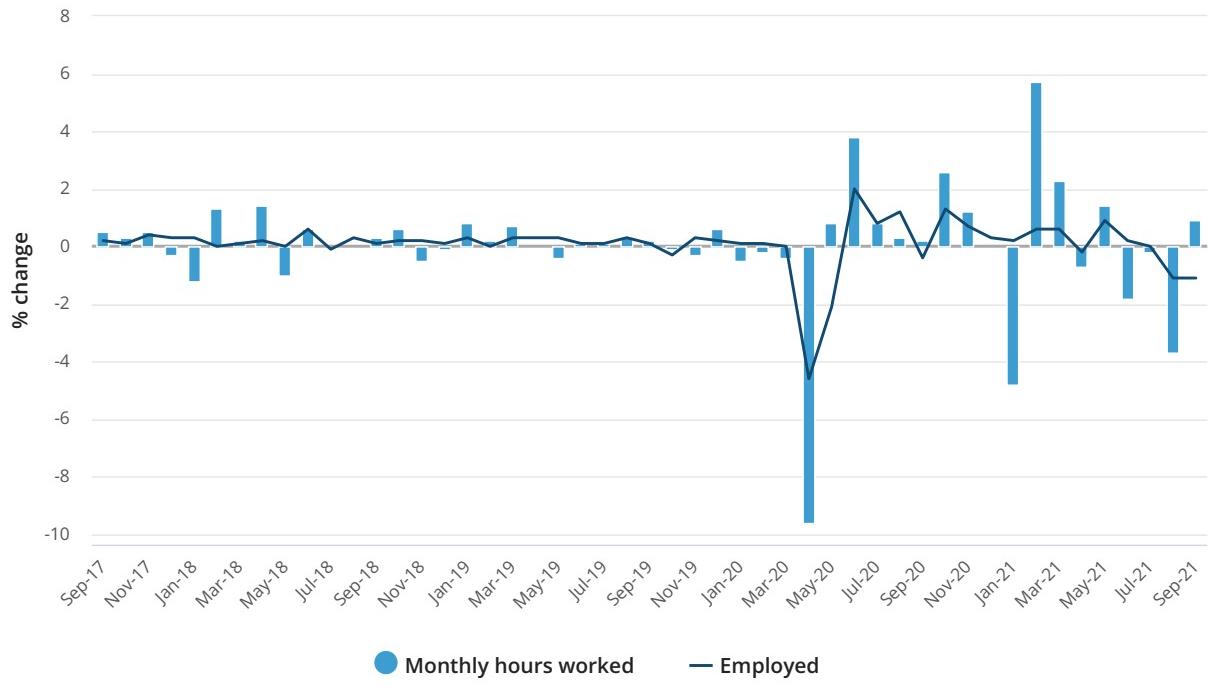
Chart 1 shows changes in hours worked and employment, indexed to March 2020, while Chart 2 shows monthly changes in hours worked and employment since September 2017. They highlight the extent to which hours worked provide a more comprehensive indication of the extent of labour market impacts over the pandemic than employment, given some employed people temporarily have reduced hours or no work, without necessarily losing their jobs.

Chart 1: Hours worked and employment index, Seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100.0)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Chart 2: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Seasonally



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

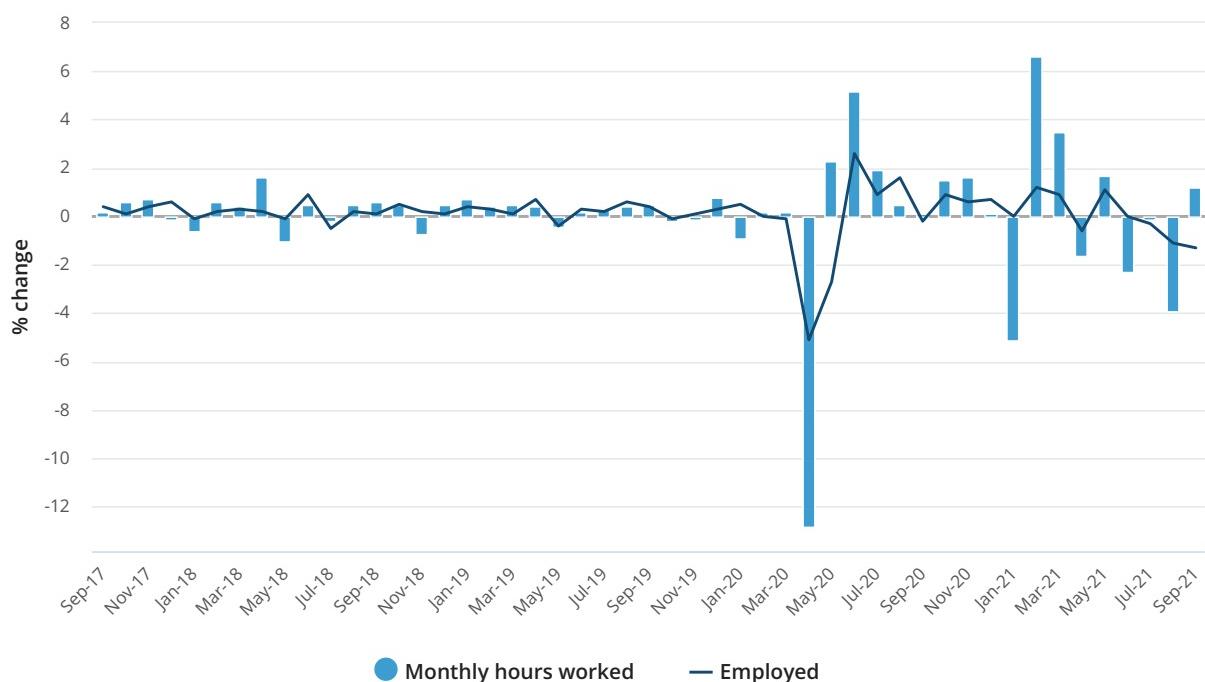
Changes in employment and hours worked for men and women

Table 2a: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Males,
Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

Table 2b: Monthly change in employment and hours worked, Females, Seasonally adjusted



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 1 and 19

States and territories

Over the COVID period, hours worked have been impacted when jurisdictions move into (and out of) lockdowns and other restrictions. This was again evident in changes in hours worked across many of the states and territories in September.

Despite the continued lockdowns across New South Wales, monthly hours worked rose by 13.8 million hours (2.7%) between August and September. This modest recovery followed the 7.0% fall between June and July, and the 6.5% fall between July and August, with hours worked remaining well below June 2021 (10.6%). The monthly increase was attributed to more hours being worked by full time employed people in September (compared with August), as well as people who had worked fewer hours than usual in August.

Monthly hours worked in Victoria fell by 16.6 million hours (3.6%) between August and

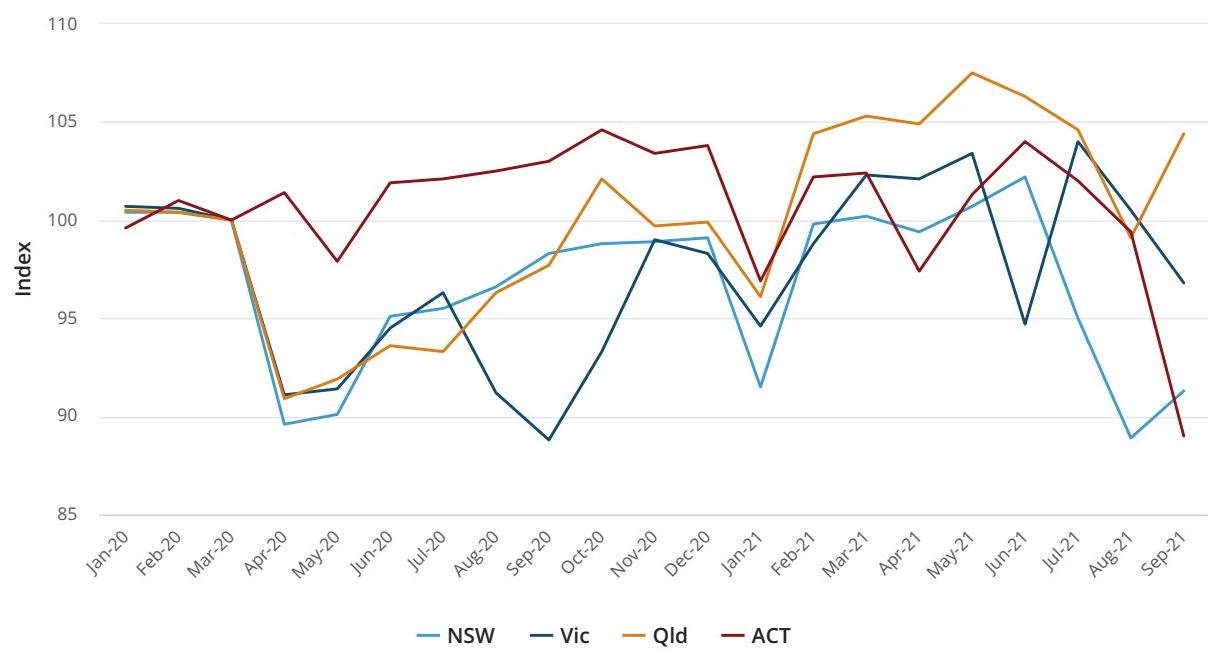
September, following the 3.4% fall between July and August 2021, and were 3.2% lower than March 2020.

Monthly hours worked in Queensland rose 18.7 million hours (5.4%) between August and September, following the 5.3% fall between July and August, indicating the extent of recovery from the impact of the lockdowns in August.

Monthly hours worked in the Australian Capital Territory fell by 3.3 million hours (10.5%) between August and September, following the 2.5% fall between July and August and were 11.0% lower than March 2020.

Chart 3 shows the changes in monthly hours worked for New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory, indexed to March 2020.

Chart 3: Monthly hours worked index, selected states and territories, seasonally adjusted (March 2020 = 100)



Source: Labour Force, Australia Tables 19 and 19a

People working fewer hours

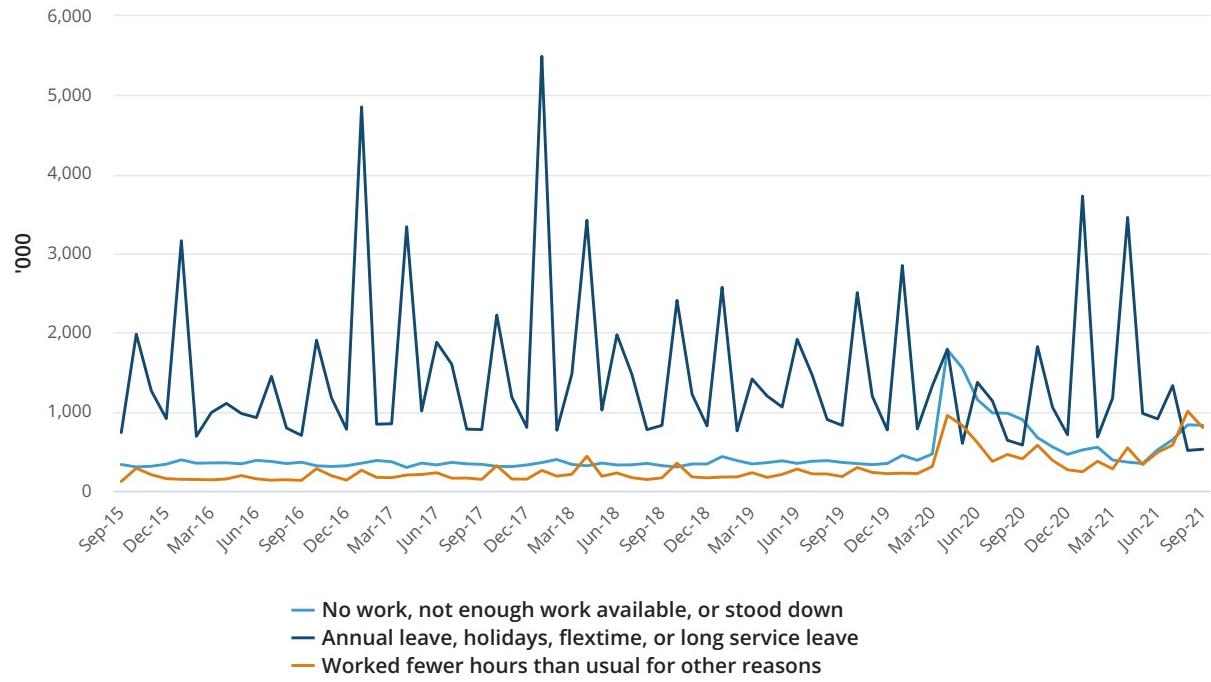
Chart 4 shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in September 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 525,300 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 827,600 people. This was a decrease of 6,200 from August 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 799,500 people. This was a decrease of 206,000 from August 2021

When assessing the impacts of lockdowns, it is important to consider larger than seasonal changes in people reporting 'economic reasons' (that is, people reporting having no work, not enough work or being stood down) and 'other reasons'. People reporting other reasons has increased during periods of lockdowns, indicating that some respondents feel that the longstanding categories do not fully capture the complexity of the restrictions and/or that it is difficult for them to attribute the reasons to a single category.

In addition to economic reasons and other reasons, some people who are impacted by lockdowns may also report different reasons, such as taking annual leave or holidays or using flexitime during the lockdown period. All reasons are available from data cubes EM2a and EM2b.

Chart 4: People working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, Original

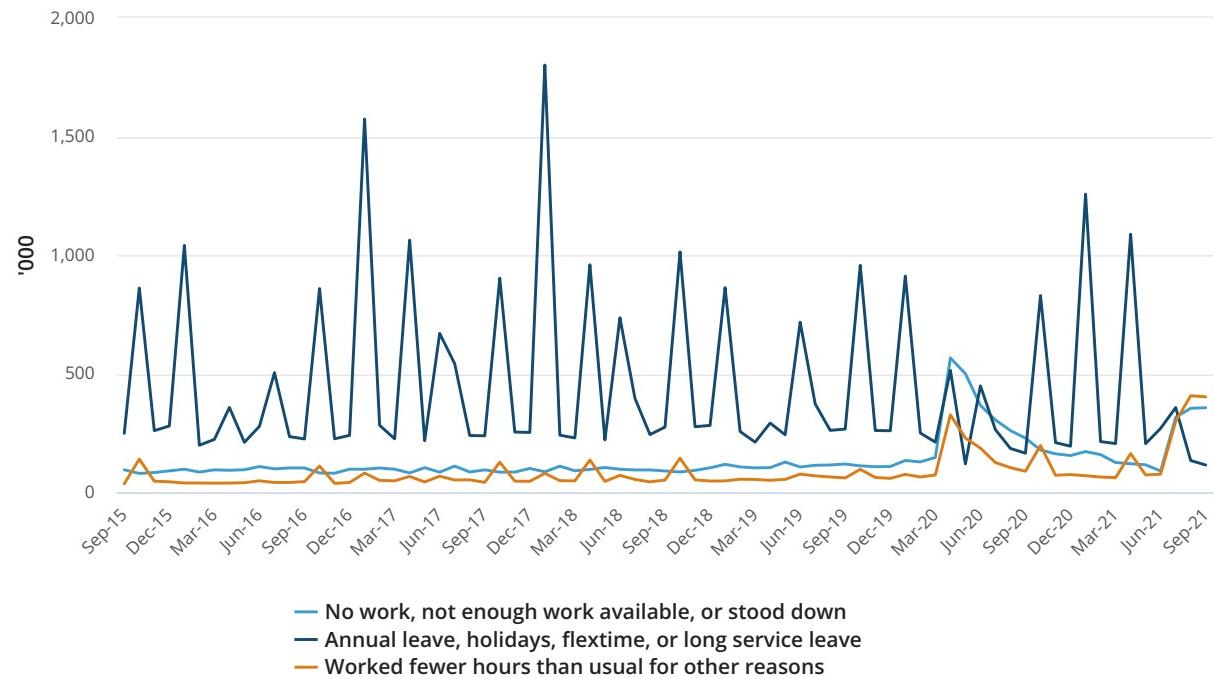


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 4a shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in September 2021 in New South Wales:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 115,500 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 357,000 people. This was an increase of 2,400 from August 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 402,900 people. This was a decrease of 4,700 from August 2021

Chart 4a: People working fewer than their usual hours in New South Wales, Original

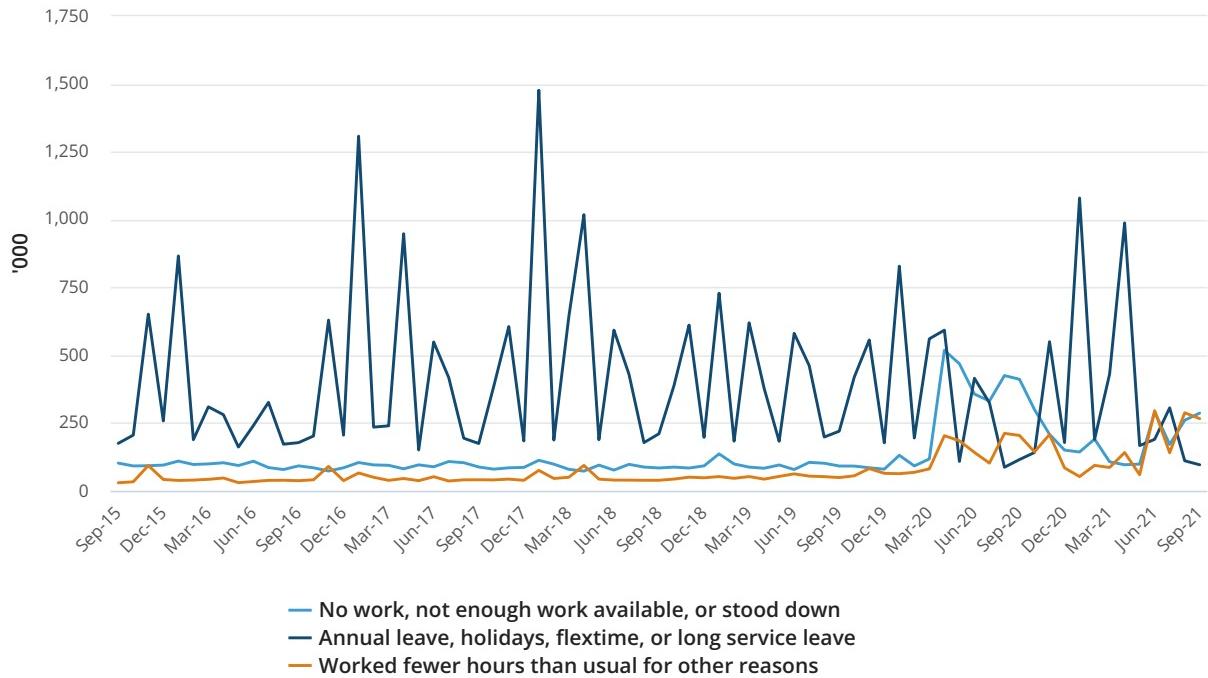


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4b shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in September 2021 in Victoria:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 95,800 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 286,500 people. This was an increase of 26,400 from August 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 266,000 people. This was a decrease of 21,600 from August 2021

Chart 4b: People working fewer than their usual hours in Victoria, Original

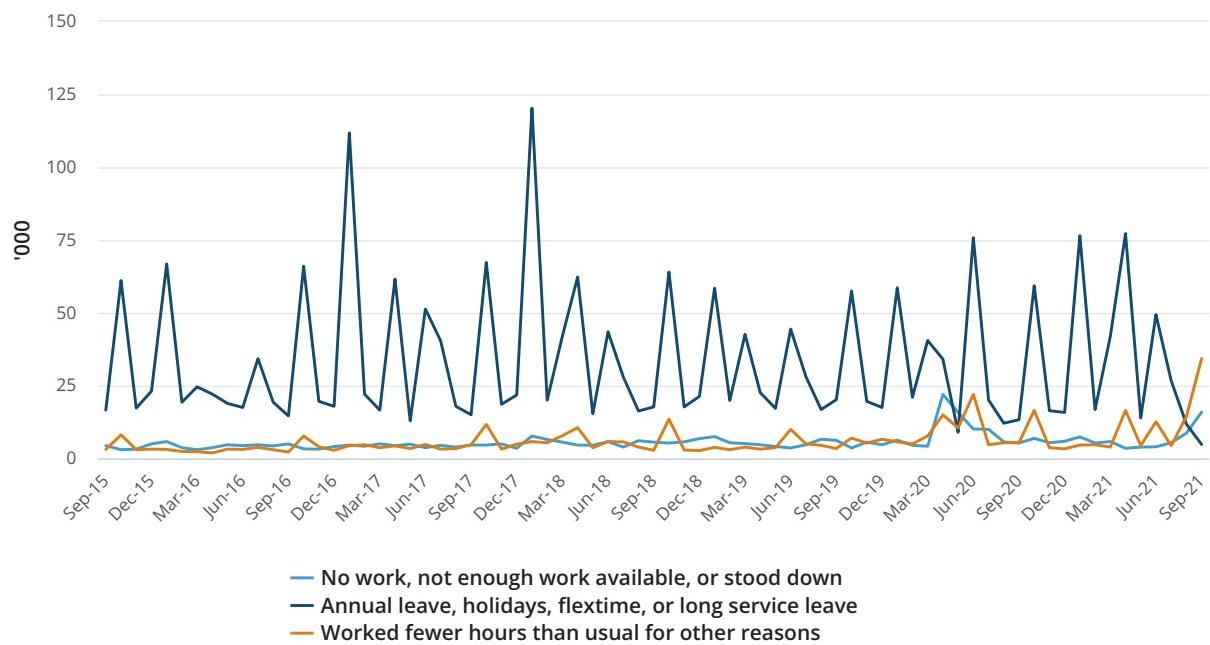


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 4c shows the number of people working fewer (or no) hours in September 2021 in the Australian Capital Territory:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 4,800 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 15,900 people. This was an increase of 7,200 from August 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 34,300 people. This was an increase of 19,900 from August 2021

Chart 4c: People working fewer than their usual hours in the Australian Capital Territory, Original

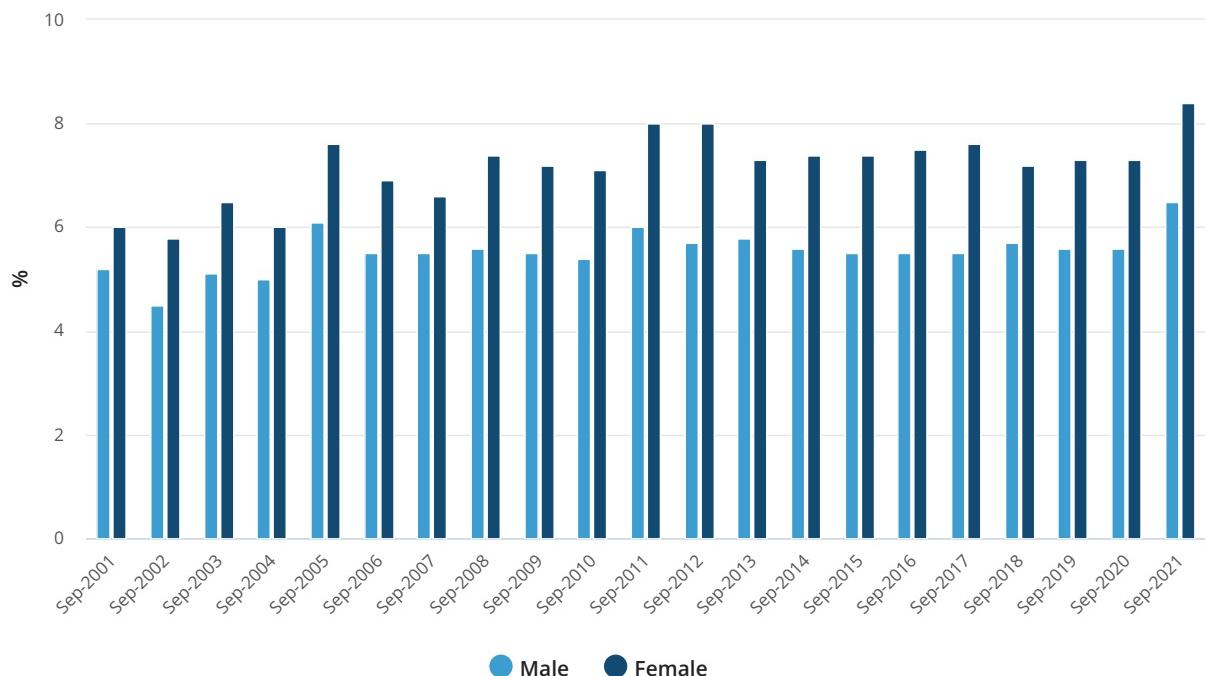


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

People working zero hours

Chart 5 shows the proportion of employed males and females who worked zero hours in September over the past 20 years. In September 2021, 7.4% of employed people in Australia worked zero hours (8.4% in New South Wales, 8.1% in Victoria, and 12.9% in the Australian Capital Territory).

Chart 5: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original

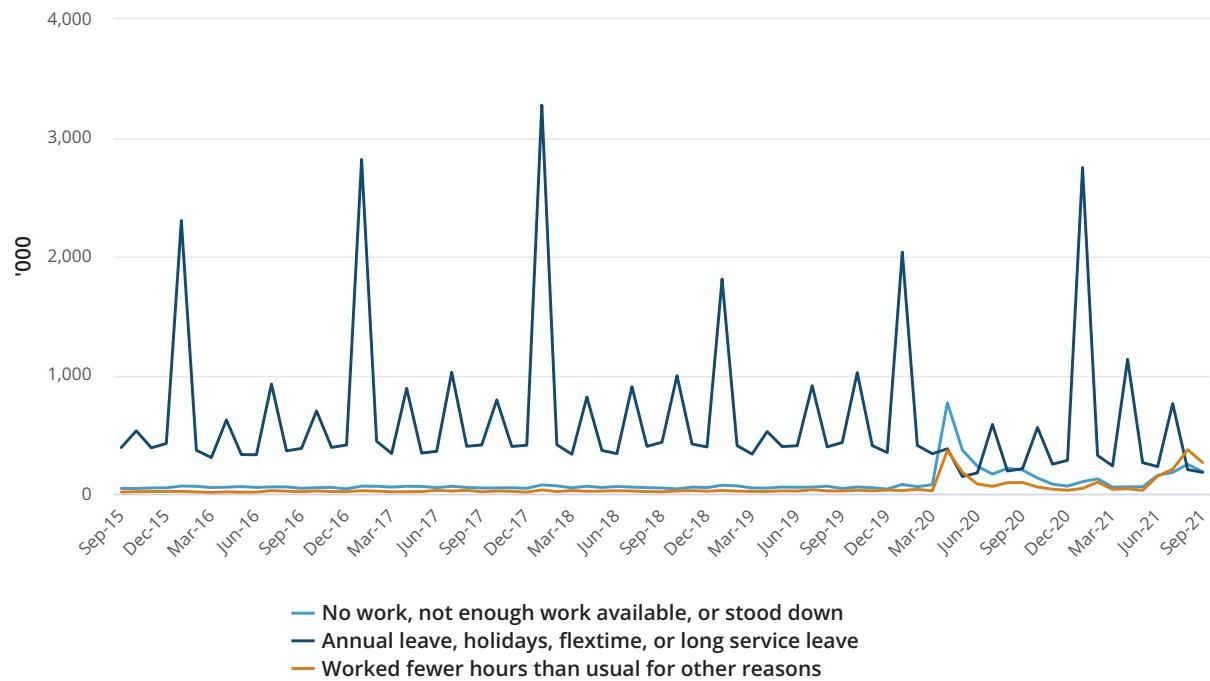


Source: Labour Force, Australia, Detailed Table 9

Chart 6 shows the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons, due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave and due to other reasons. As with people working fewer hours, there is a distinct seasonal pattern to people taking leave, with large increases each January and during school holiday periods. In September 2021:

- 180,700 employed people worked zero hours due to taking annual leave, holidays, flextime, or long service leave
- 184,800 employed people worked zero hours for economic reasons. This was a decrease of 64,100 from August 2021
- 263,400 employed people worked zero hours for other reasons. This was a decrease of 107,900 from August 2021

Chart 6: Employed people working zero hours, Original

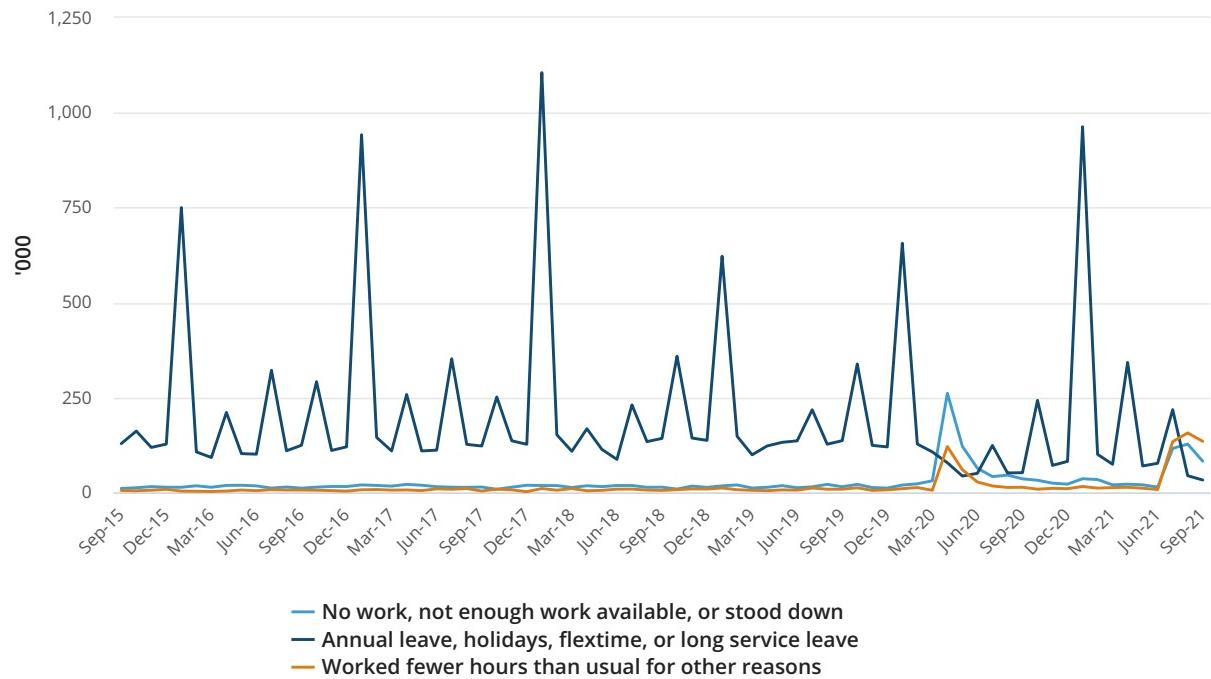


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2a

Chart 6a shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in New South Wales in September 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 32,800 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 82,300 people. This was a decrease of 45,100 from August, and 68,400 higher than in June 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 134,700 people. This was a decrease of 22,100 from August 2021, and 127,100 higher than in June 2021

Chart 6a: Employed people working zero hours in New South Wales, Original

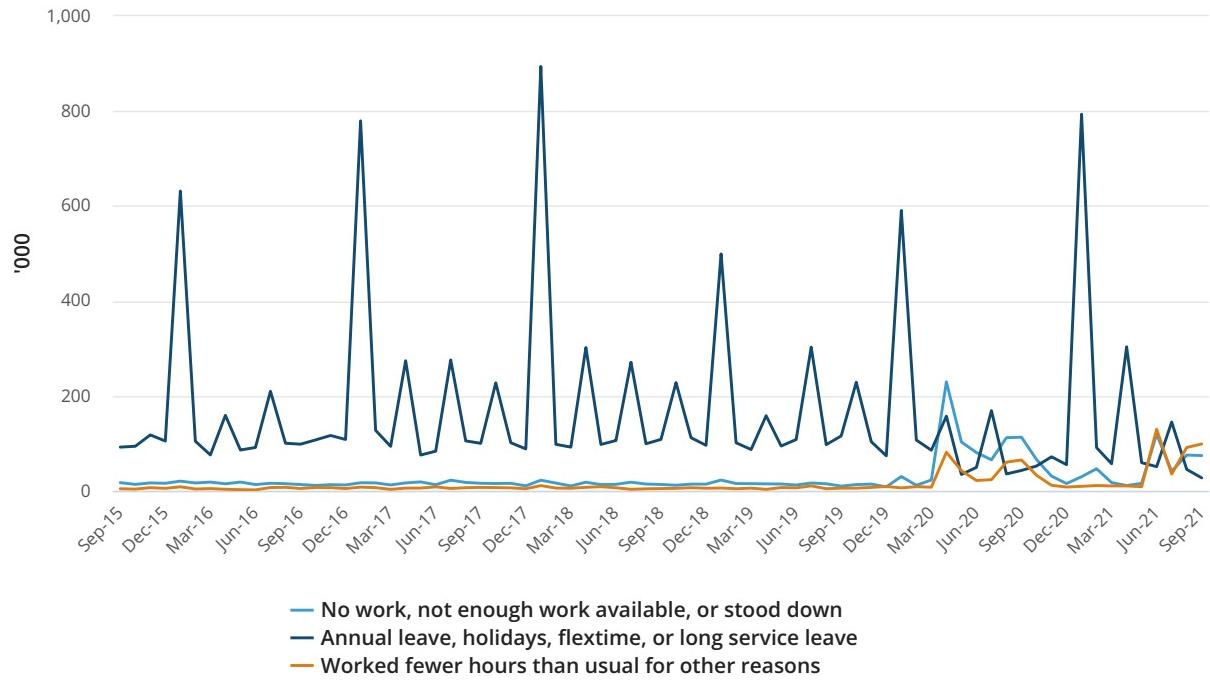


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6b shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in Victoria in September 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 27,200 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 74,200 people. This was a decrease of 1,100 from August 2021
- due to other reasons - which was 98,600 people. This was an increase of 7,400 from August 2021

Chart 6b: Employed people working zero hours in Victoria, Original

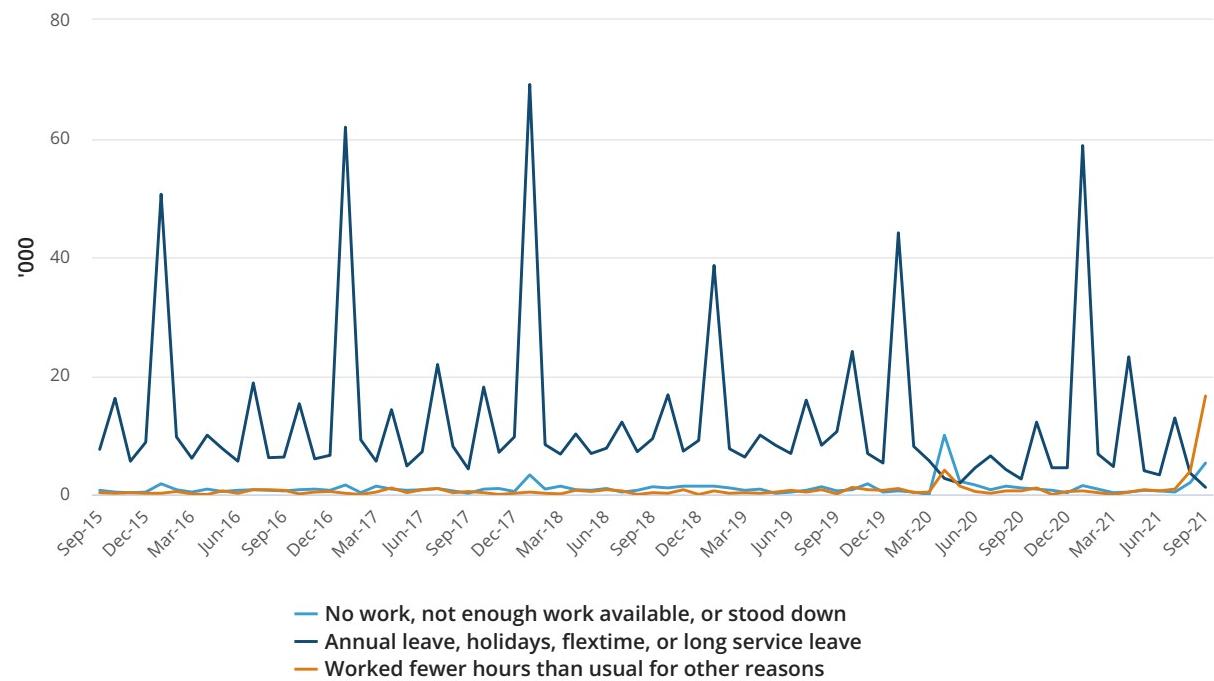


Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

Chart 6c shows the number of employed people who worked zero hours in the Australian Capital Territory in September 2021:

- due to taking annual leave, holidays, flexitime, or long service leave - which was 1,200 people
- due to economic reasons - which was 5,300 people. This was an increase of 3,300 from August 2021, and the highest since April 2020
- due to other reasons - which was 16,600 people. This was an increase of 12,700 from August 2021, and the highest recorded

Chart 6c: Employed people working zero hours in the Australian Capital Territory, Original



Source: Labour Force, Australia Data Cube EM2b

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(<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).